

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE

b. August 13, 1977

DEPUTY WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

“America is progressing towards a stronger, more inclusive future — and I know women of color are a driving force in that evolution.”

An immigrant, an activist and an author, Karine Jean-Pierre was named principal White House deputy press secretary in January 2021. She made history as the first Black person in 30 years — and the first out lesbian — to address the White House press corps.

Jean-Pierre was born in Martinique, the eldest child of Haitian parents who fled the dictatorship of François Duvalier. When Jean-Pierre was 5, her family moved to Queens, New York, in pursuit of the American dream. Instead, like so many immigrants, her parents faced financial hardship. Her father, a trained engineer, drove a taxi to support the family. Her mother worked as a home health aide.

Feeling like the ultimate “outsider” and under immense pressure to succeed, Jean-Pierre suffered from depression and attempted suicide in early adulthood. She discusses her struggles and achievements and offers advice to aspiring young changemakers in her political memoir, “Moving Forward: A Story of Hope, Hard Work, and the Promise of America” (2019).

As the Biden administration’s deputy press secretary, she is the first out lesbian and the second black person to lead a formal White House press briefing.

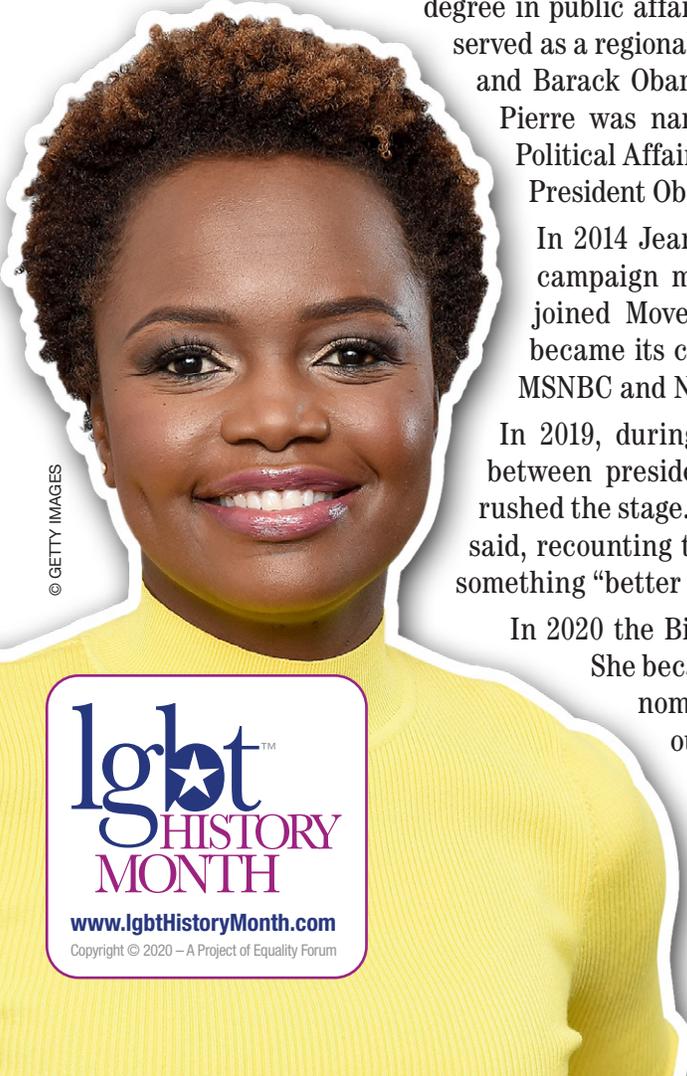
Jean-Pierre earned a bachelor’s degree from the New York Institute of Technology and a master’s degree in public affairs in 2003 from Columbia University. After graduate school, she served as a regional political director of John Edwards’s 2004 presidential campaign and Barack Obama’s 2008 campaign. When Obama was elected president, Jean-Pierre was named regional political director for the White House Office of Political Affairs. In 2012 she became the deputy battleground states director of President Obama’s reelection campaign.

In 2014 Jean-Pierre began teaching at Columbia University and served as campaign manager for the ACLU’s Reproductive Freedom Initiative. She joined MoveOn.org, the progressive policy advocacy group, in 2016. She became its chief public affairs officer and provided regular commentary on MSNBC and NBC News.

In 2019, during a political forum she was moderating, Jean-Pierre jumped between presidential candidate Kamala Harris and an angry protester who rushed the stage. “Here comes this guy with all of his male privilege,” Jean-Pierre said, recounting the experience as both scary and insulting. He insisted he had something “better to talk about.”

In 2020 the Biden campaign tapped Jean-Pierre to serve as a senior advisor. She became campaign chief of staff for Harris, then the vice presidential nominee, making Jean-Pierre the first Black person and the first out lesbian to hold the position. In 2021 the Biden administration named Jean-Pierre principal deputy press secretary in a historic move that also placed her on the first all-female White House communications team.

Jean-Pierre lives in Washington, D.C., with her wife, Suzanne Malveaux, a national CNN correspondent, and their daughter, Soleil.



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